

Thought from the Rectory April 2020

Throughout my life (and I'm 61) I have been fortunate enough to live in a stable, democratic society. Although I have often thought about and prayed for those living in fear, amongst the chaos of war, civil unrest or natural disaster I have never had to face it personally. And yet, in a few short weeks, we are living in what still feels an unreal situation.

Jesus, at the first Easter, lived with fear, suffering and death. He knew that the crowds who cheered him into Jerusalem were going to turn on him. He knew that those in power would conspire with one another to lead him to an unjust trial and death. He knew that his followers would think that he had been defeated – and that evil and suffering had triumphed.

That was Mary Magdalene's view as she went to Jesus tomb: -

“Early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene went to the tomb and saw that the stone had been removed from the entrance.”

Initially she was terrified, fearing that Jesus' body had been stolen. In despair she ran to tell Jesus' friends. It was only later, after asking a figure outside the tomb if he knew where Jesus had been taken, that she realised this was Jesus – now risen from the dead! She was filled with new hope and joy.

Ever since people have discovered new hope, peace and purpose through daring to believe that faith in Jesus can make a positive difference to their lives. And it is often during times of fear and suffering that people turn to God for help. Through this people frequently find that God gives them a peace that passes human understanding and a resilience that helps them cope.

The Bible teaches that times of suffering and challenge can result in something positive. I am already sensing a desire in our villages to become stronger as a community and to support each other – it is good that networks are being formed to assist with this. I would like to leave you with a poem which sums up what I hope will be the legacy of this difficult time: -

"When this is over, may we never again take for granted
A handshake with a stranger
Full shelves at the store
Conversations with neighbours
A crowded theatre
Friday night out
The taste of communion
A routine check-up
The school rush each morning
Coffee with a friend
The stadium roaring
Each deep breath
A boring Tuesday
Life itself.

When this ends
may we find
that we have become
more like the people
we wanted to be
we were called to be
we hoped to be
and may we stay
that way — better
for each other
because of the worst."
Laura Kelly Fanucci

Although we are not able to hold services at present, St Michael's (now the Parish Church of Hilperton and Staverton) and St George's, Semington remain open as usual and there will be resources in them to help you reflect and pray. There are also resources for prayer and worship on our website: www.canalsidebenefice.org.uk. Do get in touch if you would like to chat or need support.

With my prayers and best wishes,

John

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